

Federal government

The federal government sets the overall tone for policy and planning to maximize our nation's economic prosperity, provide for our common defense, and protect the health and well-being of our citizens. The federal government also remains the chief steward of our major infrastructure systems and many valuable natural resources, all of which greatly impacts decision making at the state and local levels.

When it comes to implementing the types of strategies and policies in regional plans like GO TO 2040, the federal government should play a clear leadership role in steering the efficiency and effectiveness of how public money gets spent at all levels of government.

This section describes how federal decisions affect plan implementation, followed by examples of how GO TO 2040's implementation can be supported by federal actions. These are organized into the areas of livable communities, mobility, human capital, and governance. It also contains links to pages on CMAP's website where more information can be found.

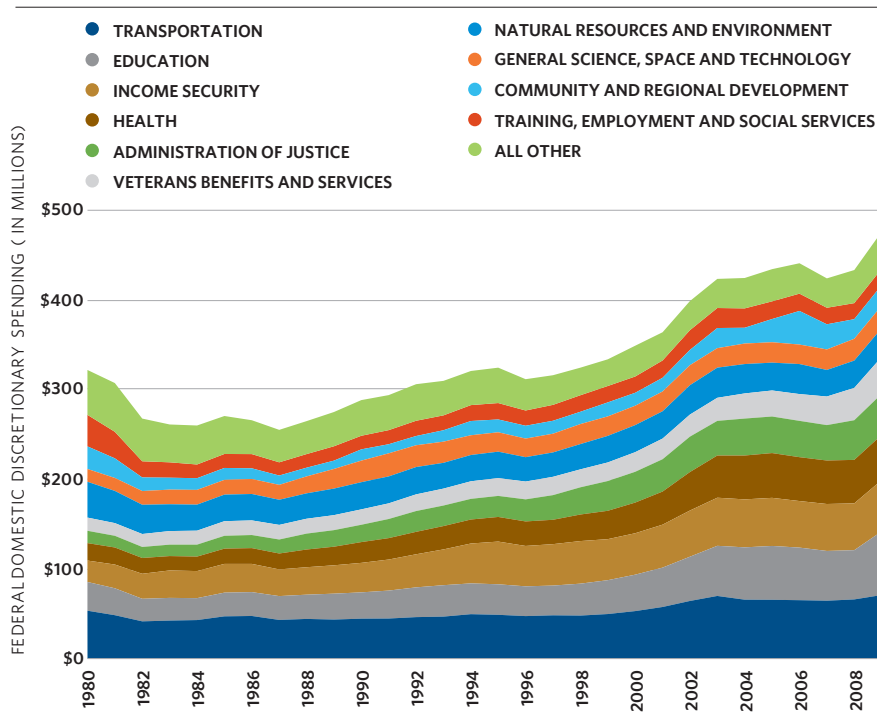
How Federal Decisions Affect Plan Implementation

The federal government is critical to the success of GO TO 2040. It must decide how to allocate billions in taxpayer dollars annually across a variety of different programs, services, and projects. It also must set priorities and develop criteria for how funding should flow through to the state, regional, and local levels.

Federal leadership is vital not only to the process of regional planning, but to its eventual success at implementing real change on the ground in our communities.

Over \$500 billion annually is spent by the federal government on domestic discretionary programs — expenditures other than national defense and international affairs or mandatory programs like Social Security and Medicare. Large domestic discretionary items include transportation, education, income security (made up largely of housing assistance), community and regional development, and natural resources and environment spending. Historical federal spending is shown in **Figure 67** below.

Figure 67. Federal domestic discretionary spending, 1980-2009



Measured in 2005 constant dollars

Source: Budget of the United States Government, FY 2010, Table 8.8

While dollar amounts in this chart shed light on federal funding priorities, the mechanisms for how these dollars flow may be even more important. States and local governments usually comprise the “delivery systems” for many of these programs and services, and they often retain a high degree of discretion over where the funding should eventually flow. Transportation, the largest federal domestic discretionary spending item, exemplifies this arrangement — the federal government sets the policy framework through numerous programs, appropriates the funds from these programs through to states using varying criteria, and then allows states a fair degree of discretion in terms of project selection.

The federal government also provides the context, direction, and funding for most planning and decision making on the metropolitan scale. The regional transportation process, including the requirement of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), is a federal initiative. More recently, the federal government has stressed the importance of regional comprehensive plans as vehicles for driving investment decisions. The degree to which plans like GO TO 2040 can be implemented will be influenced by future federal investment, guidance and policy decisions. Overall, the federal government can help to implement GO TO 2040 by actions such as:

Placing a high priority on investing in metropolitan regions like northeastern Illinois, as central building blocks for increasing the nation’s overall economic prosperity.

Emphasizing holistic solutions to multidimensional problems like congestion and climate change by supporting interagency coordination and the implementation of comprehensive plans.

Continuing to make smart investments in our nation’s infrastructure systems, to protect our most vital natural resources like the Great Lakes, and to make the kinds of education and workforce investments that drive innovation, supporting regional and national economic prosperity.

The federal government has already emphasized comprehensive approaches to creating more sustainable and livable communities by coalescing what are typically compartmentalized grant programs from agencies like the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). While these agencies have historically pursued often different (and sometimes divergent) goals, more coordinated investment decisions harnessing the connections among transportation, land use, housing, and environment should further the goal of more livable, sustainable communities.

Livable Communities

The federal government can play a catalytic role in supporting investment decisions consistent with GO TO 2040's emphasis on livable communities. While efforts across the areas of land use, housing, resource conservation, and open space will be largely implemented by localities, the federal government can help through targeted funding and other support.

Land Use and Housing

An important federal role in the areas of land use and housing is to support community planning strategies primarily through funding support, like block grants, matching grants, and other assistance. The federal government can also play a major role in expanding economic opportunities and providing decent housing in disadvantaged communities, including stabilizing communities whose viability has been damaged by foreclosures. Targeted federal assistance can help state and local governments, nonprofits, and developers collaborate to acquire land and property, rehabilitate abandoned properties, and offer financial assistance to low- to middle-income homebuyers. GO TO 2040 specifically recommends that the federal government target its housing investments in ways that align with public transit.

While project implementation is done at the local level, federal dollars are often vital for moving complex projects along. They often require vast tracts of land containing many parcels, which can be cost prohibitive to developers. Federal funding can be particularly helpful for remediating brownfields, vacant and contaminated properties that can create serious barriers to community reinvestment opportunities. Nine different federal agencies administer brownfield remediation programs, including the U.S. EPA and HUD, which offer funds for activities including planning, environmental assessments, and technical assistance to direct funding for clean-up activities at certain properties.



The Village of Oak Park used federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership Program funds from HUD to fund a single-family rehabilitation program. The program serves low and very low-income homeowners by helping them maintain their homes at safe and desirable standards while preserving the Village's housing stock. Image courtesy of Eric Rogers



In 1997, Chicago was chosen as one of the first "Showcase Communities" for a brownfields initiative that coordinated resources of over 15 federal agencies to address local cleanup and reuse issues. U.S. EPA funds were leveraged with other grants, including one from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), to clear a brownfield site of more than 600,000 tons of concrete which was then used in city infrastructure projects. Since 2002, the site has been home to the Chicago Center for Green Technology, the most comprehensive green design educational resource in the Midwest. The building itself is a prime example of green design. Image courtesy of Flickr user Andrew Ciscel

Resource Conservation

GO TO 2040 focuses its recommendations primarily on local and regional actions to reduce energy and water consumption. However, since environmental issues cross local, regional, and state borders, the federal government has a vital role to play. Climate change is perhaps the most significant global threat facing present and future generations. Climate change necessitates not only serious debate about matters of federal regulation (such as fuel economy standards), taxation (such as imposing a tax on carbon) and innovative market mechanisms for mitigating carbon emissions (such as “cap and trade” systems), but also the incentives built into existing federal transportation, housing, and energy policies. The federal government can set national targets, by sector or by jurisdiction, for reducing greenhouse gas reductions and supporting particular strategies for its achievement.

National targets would be an important first step for combating climate change, and should help raise the profile of comprehensive plans like GO TO 2040, which identify a range of strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Local challenges vary across the U.S., so the federal government should allow regions latitude to implement the most relevant local strategies to attain the targets.

The federal government can provide local and regional funding assistance for communities to reduce energy consumption in buildings through retrofits. It can also redouble efforts to transition away from centralized electricity generation with inefficient long-distance transmission and toward smaller-scale, decentralized generation, and the “smart grid.” This will enable better demand management, and more intelligent utilization of capacity. The federal government can also invest in and provide incentives for research, production, and transmission of clean energy technologies and alternative fuels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Great Lakes hold about 20 percent of the world’s available fresh surface water, provide an important shipping route from the Midwest to the east coast and beyond, and support recreational boating and commercial fishing in addition to a rich ecosystem. Yet the Great Lakes are beset by numerous threats including invasive species, water level declines, and ongoing and legacy pollution. The federal government can support the restoration of the Great Lakes through clean-up of legacy contamination, reduction of non-point contamination sources, and promotion of green infrastructure. The federal government has a significant role in the control of invasive species, and should also facilitate full implementation of the Great Lakes Compact, which will ensure a cooperative, performance-based investment process that balances ecological and economic goals.

The federal government plays a large role in managing and protecting our region’s waterways, particularly commercial corridors like the Calumet River and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, and our region’s ports, which include the Calumet, Chicago, and Waukegan harbors. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for maintaining large parts of the infrastructure at these harbors. This includes responsibilities such as maintaining structural integrity of breakwaters and dredging approach and harbor channels.



In October, 2009, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) awarded an Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) led consortium \$8 million in funding to support wind-energy research facilities. The funds will be used to construct a test wind turbine in Marseilles, Illinois to discover techniques for making turbines more effective and efficient. Also, IIT will offer a number of educational opportunities to students interested in pursuing careers in the field of wind energy engineering. IIT was also awarded \$5 million in April 2010 to develop and institute courses and certificate programs for smart grid technology. The grant will fund a Smart Grid Education and Workforce Training Center, which is expected to train 49,000 employees from the power industry, union workers, teachers, and students over three years. Photo courtesy of iStockphoto.com



In February 2010, the U.S. EPA earmarked \$2.2 billion for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) over the next 5 years — \$475 million of which has been approved in President Obama’s FY 2010 budget. GLRI was created to target the most significant problems that plague the Great Lakes, including invasive aquatic species, non-point source pollution, and contaminated sediment. In 2010, \$250 million in grants will be available to fund a variety of projects aimed at achieving the GLRI’s goals. Image courtesy of Flickr user kendoman26

Open Space

The federal government should support direct investment in open space, particularly to preserve large “macrosites.” This can happen through formation of national wildlife refuges, or the transfer of surplus federal property to open space uses, as occurred at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and Fort Sheridan.

Local Food

GO TO 2040 identifies a variety of actions by the federal government that would support local food production and improved access to food. The federal government subsidizes various forms of agricultural production and also sponsors agricultural preservation programs, which fund the purchase of easements. The federal government can support local food production by providing the tools and resources necessary to ensure that its farmland preservation investments and general agricultural subsidies promote viable local food systems.

The federal government can support a variety of demonstration programs to evaluate different means of providing better food access in “food deserts,” including funding these efforts and communicating best practices. Federal financing assistance to spur private investment in supermarkets in underserved areas is specifically recommended in the local food section. Also, support for linking hunger assistance programs and local food production would benefit both systems.

Human Capital

The federal government can also play a role in supporting education, workforce development and economic innovation. Our region's future economic prosperity requires attentiveness to a supportive business environment, particularly through attracting and retaining a skilled workforce that can fill the job demands of the 21st Century.

Education and Workforce Development

Education and workforce development are major federal expenditures, and GO TO 2040 supports the efforts of various education stakeholders. The plan calls for the federal government to increase the flexibility of federal funding for workforce development programs and allowing funding recipients to create more locally-specific, effective programs.

Economic Innovation

Economic innovation, the development and commercialization of new products and processes, is a key driver of economic performance. Recent federal programs and policies have recognized the fact that regions are the drivers of our nation's economy. Investing in regional economic innovation is gaining importance in federal policy as a way to support economic growth. Federal financing can harness the power of regional industry clusters and help transition start-up firms from incubator programs into the business world.

Some of the best opportunities for economic growth in the next decade are in emerging green industries that are building on existing capacity in the region, such as the manufacturing of components for wind turbines or solar panels by metal manufacturers who are already producing similar products. By growing "green jobs" in metropolitan regions and elsewhere, the U.S. can create a competitive advantage in this growing economic sector. The federal government can lead the way in financing major research and development projects involving green technology, supporting workforce development programs to train or retrain the workforce for specialized skills in a new green economy, and introducing programs or regulations to implement clean energy technologies and alternative fuels. These types of assistance can spur private-sector and university-driven innovation.



The Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy (ARPA-E) was established within DOE to fund projects to develop technologies that reduce energy related emissions and improve energy efficiency. Nalco Company, based in Naperville, received \$2.2 million to capture and desorb carbon from smokestacks of coal-fired plants. Image courtesy of Nalco Company

Efficient Governance

The GO TO 2040 plan also stresses the importance of governance, and the federal government has a particular role in addressing coordinated investment.

Coordinated Investment

GO TO 2040 recommends increased coordination across government agencies, with a particular focus on the federal level. The federal government can continue to emphasize coordination across different agencies and continue to support the implementation of regional comprehensive plans. Increased alignment in goals, priorities, and grant requirements across different agencies like U.S. DOT, HUD, and U.S. EPA will promote comprehensive solutions to our most pressing problems and minimize duplication of effort or competing regulations and objectives.

When the federal government speaks with “one voice” on issues like transportation, housing, and environmental policy, it can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our investment decisions, which bolsters our regional economy and strengthens our communities.



In June 2009, U.S. DOT, HUD, and U.S. EPA joined forces to promote affordable housing with more transit options while protecting the environment. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities will coordinate investment based on a set of livability principles, including the integration of housing, transportation, water infrastructure, and land use planning and investment. HUD is funding a \$150 million Sustainable Communities Initiative for regional planning efforts that incorporate housing and transportation development together. Image courtesy of Flickr user [cjhumphrey1](#)

Regional Mobility

GO TO 2040 emphasizes the importance of federal funding and regulations in enhancing regional mobility.

Transportation Finance

The federal government allocates large amounts of funding for the purposes of maintaining, modernizing and expanding our highway and transit networks. The federal government can support GO TO 2040's vision for transportation by emphasizing sustainable revenue sources, directing investments toward regional priorities, and using performance-driven criteria for more transparent, outcome-based decisions. It can support the efforts of regions to evaluate and prioritize local infrastructure investments in a comprehensive way that looks beyond transportation benefits to include land use, economic, environmental, and other impacts. The federal government can also continue to emphasize strategies which enhance safety and security for all users on expressways, arterials, transit, and local roads.

Moving toward more sustainable revenue sources for transportation may require a stronger emphasis on user fees and other “pay as you drive” strategies not simply to raise revenue, but to strengthen the public’s willingness to support infrastructure investment and to mitigate the continuing problems of congestion on our roads. The federal government can continue to support pricing and managed facilities including congestion pricing, dedicated lanes, high occupancy toll lanes (HOTs), as well as technologies and other travel demand management strategies that can achieve travel congestion reduction and other related benefits, such as reduced travel delay and hours of travel, greater use of transit and rideshare participation, improved safety, improved air quality, improved quality of life, and enhanced economic activity. The federal government should also explore potential long-term replacements for the federal gas tax, such as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fees; these require exploration and action at the federal level to be feasible.



The federal government has cited the reduction of diesel emissions as a high national priority. In the Chicago region, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funds have been used to do CSX locomotive repowers, retrofit Chicago Public School buses, and purchase hybrid electric buses for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). Other CMAQ funded projects include car sharing programs, clean air campaigns, bicycle facilities, and railroad grade separations. Image courtesy of Flickr user Carl Farbman

Public Transit

Federal funding for the maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of our region's public transit remains of vital importance. Public transit is highly valued by northeastern Illinois residents, and modernization of the system is a key recommendation of GO TO 2040. Capital needs continue to outpace available capital revenues, and the system faces a large backlog of deferred maintenance, which impacts service across the region. The use of federal funds for rehabilitation, reconstruction, and improvement projects — rather than just new capacity — is critically important to a region with major supplies of older transit infrastructure, as ours has. GO TO 2040 recommends specifically that the federal government should reform the New Starts funding source in line with these priorities.

The federal government can also provide funding to support high-speed rail, supporting the region's place as the center of the Midwest high speed rail network. This should be in addition to, not in place of, federal funds that already flow to metropolitan areas; investment in high-speed rail should not come at the expense of investment in the region's existing transit infrastructure.

Freight

As a key function of our transportation system, freight deserves special attention due to its tremendous impact in terms of jobs and economic growth. A federal intermodal freight policy can address the efficient movement of goods, and federal resources can be directed to the projects where freight has the greatest national benefit. National freight infrastructure and policies should continue to stress innovation, including the use of state-of-the-art intelligent transportation system (ITS) technologies. An overarching federal policy concerning freight would provide valuable guidance as regions attempt to confront freight challenges, many of which are national in their scope. GO TO 2040 specifically identifies the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) as an important regional priority, and one which should receive strong federal support due to its impact on freight movements, not just in the region but across the nation.



The CTA \$530 million Brown Line Capacity Expansion project received \$423.1 million in federal funding (\$245.5 million in New Starts funding and \$177.6 million in formula funds) through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program funds capital construction projects for transit systems and provides full funding grant agreements (FFGAs) if the projects are locally planned, implemented, and operated. This project included lengthening CTA station platforms to accommodate eight-car trains, upgrading operating equipment, and rebuilding stations to make them compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Image courtesy of Craighton Berman



The Electric Freight Management (EFM) project, sponsored by U.S. DOT, uses advanced information technology and web services to coordinate freight shipping and enable better supply chain communications to public and private operators. U.S. DOT will create data dictionary and tracking device standards using International Standards Organizations (ISO). The information would be deployable across different modes, and would help reduce delays. Over 40 percent of time in the shipping supply chain is spent awaiting information exchanges. An intelligent transportation system like EFM could significantly reduce freight congestion. Image courtesy of Laurence Pearlman